

Managing External and Internal Support Requirements

Units within a brigade support battalion must follow the same procedures for requesting support as the units they support.

■ By Capt. Eric Shockley

Brigade support battalion (BSB) staffs, along with company- and battalion-level leaders, constantly must mentally separate the BSB's brigade combat team (BCT) sustainment requirements from internal BSB logistics requirements. BSBs that fail to make this distinction have difficulty executing day-to-day internal battalion operations while supporting the BCT. This statement is based on observations of unit rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-90, *Brigade Support Battalion*, breaks the BSB staff's sustainment personnel into two sections: "Sustain I" for the BSB S-1 and S-4 and "Sustain II" for the support operations (SPO) staff.

One example of this separation is the battalion S-4's responsibility for BSB transportation. ATP 4-90 states that the BSB S-4 "coordinates the strategic and operational deployment of the BSB, as well as the request for movement through controlled routes" and "assists in developing unit movement plans for the BSB."

Sustainment company commanders must know which of their assets are for internal use and which assets are dedicated to BCT-level support, such as the light medium tactical vehicles in a light truck platoon. Company commanders and their executive officers (XOs) must then work with the battalion S-4 to coordinate movement of additional unit equipment.

They must also work with the SPO and battalion S-3 to ensure that the company's projected buildup of combat power is nested with the battalion's planned buildup of combat power. Because BSB units operate throughout a BCT's area of operations, the BSB S-3 section is also responsible for ensuring that subordinate unit movements are coordinated with adjacent battalion BCT-level operations within an area of operations.

For my examples below, I should clarify that a troop is a unit equivalent in size to a company or battery; a squadron is equivalent to a battalion; and a regiment is equivalent to a BCT. Within a regiment, the BSB element is known as the regimental support squadron (RSS).

Learning the Hard Way

As an RSS S-4 in an armored cavalry regiment at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, I learned the hard way the importance of separating BCT and internal BSB operations. As my RSS prepared to move into the training area, I assumed (incorrectly) that the SPO transportation cell would handle the squadron's movement requirements.

I quickly learned that was not the case and subsequently spent a long day identifying requirements and marrying loads to trailers and flatracks. I also had to synchronize the squadron's movement with the SPO transportation officer-in-charge in conjunction with the rest of the regiment's move-

ment into the training area.

Applying Lessons

I took this lesson with me as I took command of the regimental supply and transportation troop that had a distribution mission. I tried to get my leaders to understand our troop's split roles, which were our internal troop operations and external regimental support missions.

The transportation troop owned and operated the only heavy equipment transporters (HETs) in our regiment, so the prevailing thought within our troop was that we could use them whenever we needed to transport our own equipment to external locations. I had to explain that this line of thinking was incorrect.

As the commander, I was responsible for the maintenance and accountability of the HETs, along with providing trained and ready crews to operate them, but I did not have the authority to task those HETs. I explained to my team that the proper way to use the HETs for internal transportation requirements was for me or my troop XO to submit a request to the RSS S-4. The S-4 would then submit the request to the SPO transportation cell.

SPO transportation would call down to my truck master to verify availability of assets. After confirming availability and balancing any competing requirements, SPO transportation would notify the squadron S-4 of the approval, and the S-4 would in turn tell me or my XO. SPO transportation would also

pass the mission over to the squadron S-3 so that a mission order could be issued to my unit to execute the task. This may seem like a roundabout way of doing things, but it was the right process to ensure that the authorized person released the HETs (a regimental asset).

Applying Doctrine

ATP 4-90 states, “S-3 plans and operations officers plan tactical troop movements, including route selec-

tion platforms within the medical company.

BSB Rehearsals

A contributing factor to the inability to separate the two support areas is often observed during JRTC rotations when BSBs do not have a battalion-level rehearsal (incorporating movement and occupation) but instead incorporate battalion internal operations into the BCT sustainment rehearsal. This quickly leads to

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tion, priority of movement, timing, security, bivouacking, quartering, staging, and preparing movement orders.” BSB S-4 personnel must adhere to this same process as they work to evacuate equipment and move supplies within the BSB since a company commander could receive competing missions from the S-3, S-4, and even the SPO.

Discipline among the staff in routing missions to the units can help prevent overcommitting the unit and forcing a company commander to try to figure out mission priority.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) can help with this process as long as the battalion’s tactical SOP is nested with the SPO section’s external support SOP. The external support SOP must identify which assets are common user land transportation (CULT) assets so that the BSB S-4 and company-level leaders will not dedicate those assets for internal missions.

The CULT concept can also be applied to the use of the bulk fuel and water in the distribution company, the employment of wreckers from the maintenance company, and the management of medical evacu-

ation on the objective or in the assembly area when the quartering party arrives at the brigade support area (BSA) site and fails to execute quartering party tasks.

When the rest of the BSB arrives at the BSA, no plan is in place to receive and emplace units. This leads to conflicting priorities of work and misplaced units. Other effects include lapses in security and an unbalanced work/rest cycle while units attempt to occupy their areas and conduct support missions.

A BSB must execute a separate rehearsal of its occupation plan to synchronize actions among its companies. This will allow BSBs to perform their initial BSA occupation tasks that are similar to any battalion-sized unit occupying an assembly area.

Security, field hygiene, communication, work/rest plans, and preparing to receive follow-on forces are generic tasks that BSBs must be able to execute like any other battalion if they hope to successfully execute their sustainment mission. One technique that units can use to achieve success is to develop SOPs that identify the support process

and make the distinction between BSB occupation rehearsals and BCT sustainment rehearsals.

Developing and using SOPs can be a technique to streamline BSA establishment. As unit leaders prioritize available training time, they should maximize training events by incorporating SOPs to the maximum extent and conducting a thorough validation and revision of the SOPs. ATP 4-90 emphasizes this concept, stating, “The most successful units follow and revise SOPs throughout training and mission execution.”

BSB S-4

BSB S-4s cannot assume that supply requirements will be lumped in with the SPO section’s logistics status tracking. The S-4 must analyze logistics requirements internal to the BSB using company input on expected fuel consumption and supply requirements for the headquarters and companies.

The S-4 must work directly with the BSB S-3 (and typically the headquarters and headquarters company commander) to identify the class IV (construction/barrier materials) requirements to properly secure the BSA. These requirements must then be submitted to the BCT S-4 and SPO in order to coordinate resupply.

Sustainment leaders who can maintain the mental separation between BSB operations and BCT sustainment will have a better chance of success with less confusion and wasted effort. Units that fail to maintain this separation will struggle to establish operations and sustain the BCT, especially in an austere operational environment.

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